



Quaker  
Council for  
European  
Affairs

# Strategic Plan

2019–2024

# 1 Introduction

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The Quaker Council for European Affairs brings a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. In 2019 QCEA celebrates the fortieth anniversary of its founding, as it continues to promote the values of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the European context. We advocate for the intrinsic equality of all people everywhere and nonviolent approaches to conflict and insecurity, in the context of a world in urgent need of more sustainable economic systems.

QCEA calls on the European institutions and their Member States to contribute to a Europe which is peaceful, compassionate, open and just in its dealings both within Europe as well as with the countries and peoples beyond their boundaries.

In 2017 QCEA completed an organisational review and transition programme that led to significant change in governance and operations – delivered through our first five year strategic plan with a more focused vision and programmes. Over the past two years, QCEA has built a small team of expert staff leading innovative work in peace and human rights. Our quiet diplomacy approach (explained in more detail in the appendix) has been used successfully, based on the experience of our sister Quaker United Nations Offices in Geneva and New York.

Taking a strategic view of QCEA's work and the environment in which we operate, in 2019 we have taken the opportunity to review and update our original 2017-2022 strategic plan. This review and subsequent revised plan looks to the five years to 2024 and at how we can better integrate the Quaker concern about sustainability as a 'thread' within our programme work and operations. In time QCEA hopes to extend our strategic view beyond five year periods.

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## 2 European strategic context

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From where we sit in 2019, European cooperation on peacebuilding, human rights and sustainability has a significant practical and normative impact across the world. European institutions manage the largest development and peacebuilding budgets globally, as well as provide mechanisms for dialogue and enforcement of human rights standards on a continent with a long history of war and nationalism.

Technological developments and related social changes are raising fears of uncertainty and insecurity. This has been an opportunity for politicians with simple messages, especially those promising to protect existing social and economic hierarchies or romanticising forms of European colonial domination. Nationalist and other reactionary political parties have been able to win power or a share of power by positioning themselves as champions of particular identities or groups.

Our programmes are operating in an environment where European cooperation is fragmenting and European institutions are responding to perceived security challenges by increasing military cooperation and support for the arms trade. Migration continues to be portrayed as one such security challenge, with the EU reinforcing their border security rather than addressing migration as an opportunity to rethink unsustainable systems, address reasons for movement and to show solidarity. Threats to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) remain which, in turn, could affect the rights of many people in Europe.

Levels of systemic and direct violence in the world remain high, with increasing competition for control of fossil fuels and other resources, trade and communications systems. This is proving difficult for multilateral institutions to manage. Meanwhile, Europe is taking an increasingly active role in the militarisation of the Middle East and Africa, including western European arms sales to Saudi Arabia, European Union military capacity building in northern Africa and the growth of Russian military support on these continents. Additionally, proposals for the 2021-2027 European Union Multi-Annual Financial Framework, European Defence Fund and European Peace Facilities are set to provide a difficult context for the years ahead.

The threat of European disintegration that followed the failure to agree common migration and asylum policies since 2015 has lost momentum. The UK's departure from the EU has not been smooth, discouraging eurosceptic political parties from proposing similar referenda in their countries. However, the continued expansion and entrenchment of reactionary, nationalist and misogynist political parties and movements influences the politics of the continent.

While elections in France, Germany and the Netherlands during 2017 and 2018 stalled the progress of the nationalist politics, political developments in Italy and some central and eastern European countries make it unlikely that paranoia, which has driven the EU recently, will decline – or that the EU will move away from militarisation which has been used as a frightened attempt to appear unified.

This context creates important risks and opportunities for QCEA's programme work. Risks include the possibility of 'othering' movements with opposing views, reinforcing social and political polarisation. In opposing militarisation, fear and hate-based political developments, we may sometimes risk encouraging a self-fulfilling prophecy of European disintegration, nationalism and the failure of multilateralism.

Conversely, our environment provides an opportunity for QCEA to model listening and inclusive dialogue at the European-level. Where institutions and other civil society organisations are failing to offer an alternative to isolationist narratives, QCEA can provide space for voices from different sides of physical and political borders to share parallel experiences in ways that speak to the equal value of all people.

## 3 Our vision and values

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“QCEA brings a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality, to Europe and its institutions.”

Our “mission” can be expressed as promoting Quaker values at the European level. We advocate non-violent approaches to conflict resolution, promote policies that respect the intrinsic equality of all people everywhere, and try to ensure that European policy demonstrates respect for the essential balance between humanity and nature to sustain all forms of life on the planet.

As an independent non-governmental organisation committed to these values – and with long practical experience in promoting them – our aim is to contribute to infusing them into European policy-making and practice through:

- a **peace programme** which brings a new approach to security focusing on nonviolent responses to conflict;
- a **human rights programme** centred on living, breathing human rights and rooted in the experience of people on the move;
- given the climate crisis, seeking opportunities to embody and promote climate justice, earth-care and **sustainability** in our peace and human rights programmes.

## 4 Goals

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In this strategic plan, “long(er)-term” looks at the three to five year horizon for programmes, while “short(er)-term” is focused on individual projects which we aim to complete within one to two years.

### 4a. General QCEA long-term goals

To achieve our vision, our overall goals are:

1. To make a significant contribution to reducing the fear of the ‘other’, disrupting efforts to dehumanise and divide;
2. To help shape European policies which recognise the shared humanity and vulnerability of all people;
3. To promote and model inclusive problem solving to address whole-of-society challenges to peace, justice and equality;
4. To encourage policy changes which promote equality and therefore equal partnership, both between different kinds of stakeholders and between initiatives which are relevant inside and outside Europe.
5. To work in ways that recognise the climate crisis and opportunities for more just and sustainable policies.

### 4b. Programme goals

**Peace programme: EU institutions and Member States give proper consideration to civilian responses to security challenges**

1. QCEA brings new ideas for conflict resolution and peacebuilding as alternatives to further militarisation.
2. The peace programme develops and advocates for a new vision of security, adapted to the European context and that is based on shared responsibility, embodying economic, social and political measures.
3. In order to do so, the peace programme highlights and develops research on civilian nonviolent alternatives to conflict, including peace education and mediation, and gives them visibility.

4. The programme emphasises the importance of peacebuilding principles such as inclusiveness and gender equality in all types of engagement.
5. To increase the focus on peacebuilding tools, with an aspiration to see this reflected in how European governments and institutions talk about their role in the world, and increased European funding for peacebuilding.

**Human rights programme: Energise European human rights policymaking to address the fundamental inequalities and lack of solidarity inherent in the treatment of people who migrate to Europe**

1. QCEA will create space in the human rights policymaking sphere for a more radical and accessible agenda focused on how human rights are experienced in practice. One that challenges the normalisation of othering and dehumanising discourse and seeks to disrupt the deeply embedded hierarchies that render us permanently unequal.
2. Our approach will emphasise ‘human rights and fundamental freedoms’ proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The often neglected concept of fundamental freedoms is particularly relevant to the restrictions placed on, and the lack of agency for, people on the move.
3. The programme will draw on the experience of QCEA’s previous human rights projects, especially the last two years’ work, to focus on fundamental inequalities inherent in the treatment of people who migrate to Europe that lead to:
  - Persistent rejection, lack of concern for and solidarity with migrants, as they seek to meet basic human needs and ambitions in Europe;
  - Reactionary political movements that promote polarising and fundamentalist visions of Europe;
  - Apathy regarding, or acceptance of, injustices experienced by people on the move in Europe.

From undertaking our human rights projects during 2017-19 we have learned that there is a consistent and insidious frame that influences most European policy debate and policymaking on migration. It would not be enough to identify and address each damaging manifestation separately.

In the Quaker-spirit of convening and ally-ship, the programme will work with civil society (particularly European-level NGOs) and other influential European actors to build unconventional coalitions with influence on European policy and politics. The programme will draw on the successes of recent projects by convening quiet diplomacy at Quaker House, hosting cultural events and undertaking communications work to engage both ‘heads and hearts’.

The increasing role of nationalist parties in European politics has become an important context for our work. There may be alignment of immediate interests, such as to avoid the development of EU military structures. However, the viability of coalitions should be tested to assess whether there is common ground regarding our respective end visions of society. This will ensure that neither marginalised people, nor Quaker values, are sacrificed in the name of short-term coalition building.

#### 4c. QCEA’s shorter-term (project) goals

In the past two years, every shorter-term goal established in the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan was met. Beginning in October 2019, the programme goals will focus on building on previous work with the aims of:

1. Instituting *Building Peace Together* as a foundational aspect to the peace programme. This work will include cultivating contacts made during the report’s development with a particular focus on:
  - Reaching out to different (i.e. unusual) actors;
  - Reaching into different geographical regions (via translations of *Building Peace Together* in Russian, Arabic, French and Turkish);
  - Finding the right environments for the report to be most useful as a peacebuilding tool;
  - For beginning conversations around a new vision of security, adapted to the European context and that is based on shared responsibility, embodying economic, social and political measures as outlined in the report.
2. To continue publishing research in both programme areas as it makes the work of QCEA interesting, timely and relevant to institutions. This includes new research as well as updating one or more of the areas highlighted as an area of work.

3. To use the *Peace Education* report as a means of gaining access to multiple programme areas as it can be a peace tool used in the nexus of development, humanitarian, and education policy. There is currently momentum in education and a funded opportunity to work in conjunction with other Quaker bodies.
4. To organise the first series of human rights and migration events, using a quiet diplomacy approach (i.e. off-the-record, informal, designed and facilitated around exchange, collective analysis and problem-solving, testing ideas, perspective-taking, and direct experience); developing the two types of HR activities:
  - ‘Dealing with Dilemmas’ events in partnership with leading European migration and human rights organisations that address intractable migration policy issues that have social-political root causes;
  - ‘Parallel Lives’ events, including cultural events such as exhibitions, screenings, debates, performances that connect internal European and external migration and human rights policy stakeholders in order to promote unconventional advocacy and practitioner networks around specific experiences and treatment.
5. To map initiatives, practitioners, researchers, advocates, opinion leaders in Europe whose work has an influence on migration political debate or that – through their work - demonstrate the wide variety of (less evident) effects of migration policy on people’s lives.
6. To grow QCEA’s European network of unconventional practitioners, researchers, advocates, opinion leaders available as contributors / participants in the programme events, emphasising different ways of engaging with and reflecting a diverse European geographic spread.
7. To develop a programme resource – drawing inspiration from *Building Peace Together* – which provides analysis, guidance and examples of concrete alternatives to dehumanising and destructive migration policy and practice, and reflects the ethos of the QCEA programme strategy.
8. To undertake quiet diplomacy which contributes to policies that ensure people are not returned to unsafe places and the European external policies value the rights of people on the move.
9. To expand QCEA’s media tools to present a clearer and more consistent message across media, demonstrated through evidence of reach within the European policymaking sphere and potential funders. This will include making the QCEA website more compelling, following the example of our *ChooseRespect* website.
10. Finally, given QCEA’s success in influencing the wider context in which policymaking takes place (e.g. through accessible and practical publications and media) QCEA will develop a communications plan that contributes to QCEA’s profile as a positive, informative and effective communicator.

## 5 Strategic approach

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The principles by which we will achieve success are to:

1. Ensure that all proposed work is aligned to our Quaker values;
2. Focus work on our Peace and Human Rights programmes, building on synergies between them and seize opportunities to link their work. This will provide positive opportunities to model how to erase the internal-external framing that affects how peace and human rights policies are legislated, drafted and implemented;
3. Continue our quiet diplomacy approach;
4. Avoid confrontational forms of campaigning, whilst remaining open to (i) public-facing work that seeks to impact the policymaking sphere, (ii) providing resources and connections for Quakers and other supporters with common concerns;
5. Deliver our programmes through shorter-term projects with specific objectives;
6. Continue to consider the contribution to / impact on sustainability of all our work, not only on our programmes but also on the management of our resources;
7. Continue bridging different actors and communities of actors; reaching out beyond our traditional constituency in our advocacy strategies: the military and security sectors, human rights defenders, social justice advocates, journalists;
8. Provide a space for policy makers and other groups to meet and better understand issues to find nonviolent answers;
9. Explore media opportunities, both directly and to provide support for more informed, sophisticated reporting and framing of issues in the two programmes.

## 6 Resources and enablers

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### 6a. Experience and reputation (critical success factors)

#### External

- We have credibility in Brussels to convene and are called upon to partner influential people or take part on panels on peace & security and human rights.
- We have built trust amongst different type of actors in Brussels and so are able to bring opposing actors around a table to talk.
- We have the necessary visibility versus quietness to achieve change.
- We are capable of bringing new ideas and new approaches to issues.
- We have the expertise to enable solution-orientated engagement with policy makers and develop all aspects necessary for our work to have an impact in Brussels.

#### Internal

- We are experienced and able to adapt and be positively resilient to significant and negative political change.
- We are surrounded by people that support, volunteer, work and govern QCEA who value and inspire each other, and our external partners.
- We seize opportunities to work with other Quaker agencies where our work is complementary.
- We are financially secure and our resources are used ethically.

### 6b. People

As we develop projects to deliver our goals we need to consider:

- What skills, experience and competencies are needed?
- What are our current gaps?
- Given our view of the future, what will we need in three to five years time? (e.g. skills to hire in or develop; skills mix)
- What need there is for non-resident and short-term resident expertise to fill in knowledge gaps amongst resident staff?

We have a great resource in our General Assembly members who have multi-faceted roles as governors, ambassadors, sponsors, and consultants of QCEA. We have developed the governor/trustee role since 2017, but we now have the task ahead to develop the other roles further within the GA.

We will continue to build our professional and experienced team to deliver our programme goals. The 2017 strategic direction emerging from the 2016 organisational review included a minimum staff commitment of 1.5 full time equivalent staff to be dedicated to each programme undertaken by QCEA. Experience of the past two years indicates (subject to funding) a target “optimal” staffing level of two full-time staff (lead & assistant) on each programme, plus director, communications, fund-raising and office management roles.

## 6c. Quaker House

Quaker House is a unique venue at the heart of the European institutions. It is an asset that is central to our ability to convene.

As well as continuing to maintain and manage Quaker House we also must consider how we can better use it as a resource that actively supports achieving our goals whilst endeavouring to reduce its carbon footprint. For example:

- Use for public and private events – selecting these based on how much the group and / or subject matter supports our vision and goals;
- Use for confidential ‘neutral ground’ meetings (by European institutions and civil society).

We will seek to model sustainability through our operations. For example, we will seek to ensure that the primary catering option at all of our events is vegan or vegetarian, unless this would negatively impact the inclusivity of the event in another way. Where we co-organise events with other organisations we will raise sustainability with them as part of the event planning.

## 6d. Finance and fundraising

Prudent use of our funds is essential. In the period 2017-2019 we have been using fully the Irene Jacoby designated reserve. The 2017-2020 grant awarded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust was lower than that previously received, reflecting not only the pressure their funds are under but also their expectation that QCEA draw down on its reserves during the three-year grant period. This draw-down against our general reserves started in 2017 and accelerated following agreement of the 2018 budget to support our current level of staffing. Yearly Meetings have maintained current levels of donations and, in some instances, increased these.

To continue both programmes at current staffing levels we need to bring in more “new money” – i.e. broaden our funding base – to ensure we can continue to operate in 2020 and beyond.

To do this we have a long-term fundraising strategy to:

- Build a subscription model to generate more continuing commitments to fund QCEA regularly, rather than obtaining one-off payments and donations;
- Look outside the “Quaker world” for grants and other funding (though in 2017-2018 this has had limited success);
- Develop a series of funding campaigns or activities around a specific target; (e.g.: using the “matched funding appeal” to raise small donations from individuals for which we have an offer to match from a single large donor);
- Obtain sponsorship of specific costed activities (e.g. the way *Building Peace Together* publication costs have been partially funded by specific donations);
- Develop a database of potential fundraising opportunities;
- Develop internal expertise on fundraising, such as the type of language that works in applications, building on relations in that sphere etc.;
- Engage General Assembly members in a variety of fundraising and relationship building activities including translations for grant funding, working with national and regional Quaker structures to meet the other goals in the strategy outlined above.

The ability to share successes and stories about the work of QCEA will be a crucial part of our future fundraising and relationship building.

## 6e. Partnerships

Our vision and goals are ambitious and cannot be achieved by a small organisation working in isolation. QCEA needs to build on existing partnerships and develop new ones:

- We are sufficiently involved in networks (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, Human Rights and Democracy Network, Platform for Undocumented Migrants, Christian Group on Migration and European Network Against the Arms Trade) that we can tap into them when needed.
- Continue to build and strengthen trust with relevant European institutions and Member States. Maintain and build links with other Quaker organisations: particularly QUNO New York and Geneva, as well as Britain Yearly Meeting / Quaker Peace and Social Witness.
- Through our General Assembly, work closely with Yearly Meetings to communicate that active advocacy is their (Yearly Meetings' and other Friends') responsibility.
- Continue to meet with unusual actors and networks not previously in our circles. This is the area where we may have the most impact and influence (remain unnamed as part of quiet diplomacy).
- Europe and Middle East Young Friends with which we have had an informal relationship for many years.

## 6f. Communications

The nature of our work means that there are two main audiences for all our output: European policymakers and our supporters, many of whom are Quakers. These two target groups are almost entirely distinct from each other, meaning that QCEA's communications work needs to be two-pronged.

### **Policymakers**

QCEA should increasingly play to its strengths with both its target groups. In Brussels, this means becoming more visible at policy events which are relevant to our work, through our attendance as well as our participation where possible. We will also consider a redesign of the website in order to better present our work and make a clean break with some of the 'legacy' elements of our activities.

Most importantly, however, we need to capitalise on our growing output (reports, research etc.) to increase our advocacy efforts. This means meeting more frequently with European stakeholders to discuss specific policies, with the work we have produced as a support; it also involves presenting our work publicly through advocacy events such as official launches for reports. We will also identify opportunities to produce analysis (op-eds, blogs, briefings, messaging) as part of programme communications. Our good reputation and our perceived neutrality affords us a level of respect and trust which will allow us to do more than most organisations of our size. The Quakers' reputation is built on our convictions as much as our character; staying true to our values does not have to mean lapsing into inaction.

### **Supporters**

Among our supporter base, the challenge is different. Prior to the 2017-22 strategic plan there was a missing 'middle ground' between frequent social media posts and the occasional sharing of very technical papers and publications. We need to continue to convey to our grass-roots supporters that we are active and professional, but at the same time engage with them on a non-technical level. For example, on Facebook we will distinguish between our active supporters (updated through our Friends of QCEA group) and our wider audience that follow the QCEA page.

In implementing the 2017-2022 strategic plan QCEA has become more active in Brussels and developed the perception of QCEA among potential donors. To help them to understand what QCEA does, we will produce accessible pamphlets to complement our policy documents to allow laypeople to engage with our work. Where they could be put to good use, we will distribute such publications to Quaker Meetings to increase the visibility of our work.

## 6g. Work methodologies

Other methods to undertake our work and deliver our key messages include developing:

- Quiet Diplomacy events;
- Events bringing culture and politics together for sensitisation of the broader public;
- Research outputs to provide evidence-based structure to the argument for civilian peacebuilding and respect for human rights.
- QCEA will continue to maintain process documentation (such as but not limited to meeting reports) to discuss achievements, publications, meetings, and lessons learned across the two programmes. The process documents help to delineate outcomes and next steps, as well as serving as institutional memory so that staff have an accurate map of correspondence, methodology of work, and debrief. Such documentation guides us so we know what worked and what did not. This is crucial for continued improvement and to inform decisions on further action;
- A means of gleaning from the process documentation, the stories which help describe the impacts we are having (see Saferworld outcome harvesting system and methodology) and determine which actions for the future will be most effective.

## 6h. Indicators to measure impact

QCEA has developed routine mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the impact of our work, where staff from each programme act as a critical friend to the other. This process involves recording of feedback, areas for improvement and numerical information where possible. Such indicators include:

- Examples of change in policy or practice in official documents and decisions;
- Number and type of attendance at QCEA events: variety of organisations, level of representation;
- Number of relevant contacts within European institutions and Member State governments;
- Readership: How many people read our publications, how many people sign on to our newsletters, etc.;
- Verbal Feedback by participants: type of comments and from whom;
- Number of requests for next events;
- Number of (draft) policy documents or directives modified to incorporate elements promoted by QCEA together with partners;
- Coverage of our public events, presentations, and publications in media (including social media);
- Number of invitations to present our work at external events;
- Types and diversification of partnerships, co-organisers;
- Number of mentions of QCEA work by external actors;
- Number of people QCEA sends its publications to;
- Number of requests to send publications;
- Number of networks/level of participation in networks we are part of or have been asked to join.

## 7 Plan monitoring & updating

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This updated version of the plan has been developed by the Strategic Planning Group based on the original 2017-2022 strategic plan plus feedback from staff, ExCo (QCEA's Executive Committee) and General Assembly members. This draft of the plan will be reviewed by ExCo at its meeting in Brussels in late July 2019 with a view to revising and presenting the plan to General Assembly in October 2019.

The Strategic Planning Group will continue to meet on an at least yearly basis to assess the relevance of the strategic plan against the current EU environment, adapt it (if necessary) and present any revision to ExCo and the General Assembly.

## Appendix QCEA use of and approach to “quiet diplomacy”

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### What is quiet diplomacy?

- It is a method of bringing together parties who are not aligned (for example: having a common area of interest but differing goals or priorities).
- It operates in a facilitated and confidential environment (for QCEA, in Quaker House, Brussels) that provides a “neutral ground” for meetings.
- The type of participants this is aimed at includes NGOs, lobbyists and Institutional actors.

### Why does quiet diplomacy work?

- It breaks down the hierarchical and formal structures of dialogue that usually prevent actors from opening up and seeking common ground.
- Traditional advocacy alone is not working in an environment where the rise of populism is feared.
- The same model has been very successfully used in other multilateral settings (chiefly by QUNO at the UN).
- During the first two years of the 2017-2022 strategic plan QCEA undertook quiet diplomacy across its programme work, leading processes on issues such as peacebuilding and migrant human rights in Libya, EU human trafficking policy, conflict resolution for Western Sahara and the respective roles of EU, NATO, member states and civil society in responding to conflict.

### What do we hope to achieve with quiet diplomacy and why might it be valuable?

- We want to unblock issues in peace and human rights where there is mistrust or deadlock.
- We will do this by providing a different, informal setting where participants can speak honestly and openly, listen to each other and overcome tensions (e.g. reduce the current mistrust between EU policymakers and civil society over migration policy).

- We already have other organisations that undertake effective work in Brussels keen to partner with us (e.g. the Catholic Bishops Conference that influenced the EU Global Strategy of 2016, and the leading migration network ECRE). Over the last six months we have successfully organised discussions with influential policy-makers on unpopular topics:
  1. EU policy and violent masculinity;
  2. Rethinking security on North Korea;
  3. Rethinking narratives on EU and Crimea;
  4. Militarisation of EU development spending;
  5. EU support for the arms trade.
- Both quiet diplomacy and joint work will allow QCEA to build better relationships with governments and institutions to expand our influence over the longer term. Where we partner with well-established and influential organisations, these partnerships can also be used to embed follow-up and accountability for the impact of the work.

#### **Why do we think we can do quiet diplomacy?**

- We already have a unique asset of Quaker House close to the European institutions, and are building our reputation for successful convening.
- We have trialled quiet diplomacy meetings during 2016-17 and their popularity and success significantly exceeded our expectations.
- Participants have noted the different atmosphere of our meetings, and in some cases deviated from their government's/institution's position.

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